

Maine Educational Assessment: Grade 8 Writing

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Historical Context:

March 2006

All writing prompts were “field test prompts” this year. No scores were reported to schools. Student data was reviewed and some prompts were moved forward to become common prompts. All prompts measure 1997 Maine *Learning Results* English Language Arts performance indicators G4, Stylistic and Rhetorical Aspects of Writing and F1, Standard English Conventions. These prompts are labeled “persuasion/argument” although the standards do not indicate a specific mode of writing.

March 2007

All students wrote to a common prompt about “Co-Ed Sports” which has been released and is available at:

http://www.maine.gov/education/mea/0607releaseditems/grade8_b_reading_math_writing_scitech.pdf

The released prompt includes the anchor pack of student work. Scores for this common prompt were reported to schools.

March 2008

Students will write to 2 prompts. All students will experience the same common prompt aligned to the 1997 *MLR*, labeled “persuasive/argumentative” and these scores will be reported to schools. The prompt will be released with an anchor pack of student work.

Students will also write a response to another prompt which is a field test this year. These scores will not be reported to schools. Student work will be evaluated to determine which prompts will become common items. All of these prompts are aligned to the 2007 Maine Learning Results: Parameters for Essential Instruction English Language Arts performance indicators B3, Argument/Analysis Writing and D, Language. This prompt is not labeled “persuasive” because of the new language of the *MLR* but is not significantly different than the other prompt.

March 2009

All students will write to a single prompt aligned to the 2007 *MLR: PEI* document, as indicated above.

Guidance for teaching MEA writing, grades 6-8

In the 2007 MLR: Parameters for Essential Instruction, what is the difference between the writing performance indicators B3 argument/analysis and B 4 persuasive writing?

Depending where you look, these words may be used as synonyms. However, in Maine's Parameters for Essential Instruction, argument/analysis and persuasion are presented as two distinctly different kinds of writing with separate performance indicators for each in writing. Defining the difference in this context may be somewhat different than the common use of these words elsewhere.

For our purposes:

“Argument/Analysis” refers to building one’s position in an academic sense. This is why it is paired with “analysis” and not persuasion. While the author may use some basic elements of persuasive writing to build the essay, this argument is essentially intended to inform the reader on the topic. It is informational, analytical, and tends to be more objective and fact-based.

“Persuasive” in this context refers to text which is intended to inspire the reader to do something, think a certain way, or feel a certain way. The writer’s techniques will include more subjective strategies, may build upon a distinct bias, and may include highly-charged emotional words with fewer examples of evidence.

NOTE: The MLR: PEI ELA reading standard includes separate performance indicators for literary, informational, and persuasive text. Understanding the difference between informational text and persuasive text in reading may help to enhance understanding of the difference between argument/analysis and persuasive writing.